OPEN AND SHUT?

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Wednesday, January 11, 2012

MIT Press distances itself from Research Works Act

There has been a great deal of discussion online recently about the Research Works Act (RWA), a new bill introduced into the US House of Representatives on December 16th by Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Darrell Issa (R-CA).

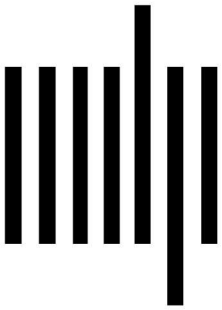
Effectively, the bill would reverse the NIH's Public Access Policy requiring taxpayer-funded research to be made freely accessible online, and prevent any other federal agency from introducing a similar requirement.

The RWA is backed by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and its Professional and Scholarly Division (PSP). On 23rd December the AAP published a press release welcoming the introduction of the bill, which it described as "significant legislation that will help reinforce America's leadership in scholarly and scientific publishing in the public interest and in the critical peer-review system that safeguards the quality of such research."

If passed, the bill would be a major setback for the Open Access movement.

AAP has been widely criticised for supporting the RWA, and some have called on members of the association to disavow both the bill and AAP's support for it. There have also been calls for AAP members to resign in protest.

It appears that at least one publisher has been listening: MIT Press has just announced that it does not support the RWA, although it does not plan to leave the AAP.



A short while ago I received an email from Ellen Faran, the director of MIT Press. The email reads, "The AAP's press release on the Research Works Act does not reflect the position of the MIT Press; nor, I imagine, the position of many other scholarly presses whose mission is centrally focused on broad dissemination. We will not, however, withdraw from the AAP on this issue as we value the Association's work overall and the opportunity to participate as a member of the larger and diverse publishing community."

After receiving the same email message, OA advocate Peter Suber commented on the Global Open Access List (GOAL), "I believe MIT Press is the first AAP-member press to disavow the AAP position on the Research Works Act. Kudos and profound thanks to Ellen Faran and MIT Press for their leadership on this issue."

*****More on the RWA here, here, here,and here*****

Posted by Richard Poynder at 23:10

Labels: Mandates, MIT Press, Open Access, Peter Suber, Scholarly Publishing

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